

been lodged with the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory.

The remaining adult bird evaded capture. This proved to be fortuitous, as it has since occasionally been joined by other Eurasian Tree Sparrows, that have presumably arrived in Darwin aboard ships. These arrivals are reported to the Parks and Wildlife Commission by an aware public and can be quickly eradicated.

## References

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## Unusual predator avoidance behaviour by a Peaceful Dove *Geopelia striata*

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Predator avoidance strategies by members of the pigeon family (Columbidae) are known to include remaining motionless or flying directly to the closest branch or vegetation (Marchant & Higgins 1993), or rapid straight flight when being pursued in the open (pers obs). However, on the 25<sup>th</sup> August 1997, I observed a very unusual strategy adopted by a Peaceful Dove (*Geopelia striata*) when pursued by an Australia Hobby (*Falco longipennis*).

The observations were made at a small muddy waterhole on the Buffalo Farm (12° 47' S 132° 35' E) in Kakadu National Park. This area is comprised of savanna open forest and woodland, with open woodland and stands of *Melaleuca* spp. on the poorly drained flats. Hearing a commotion in the Yellow-barked Paperbark *Melaleuca nervosa* bordering the waterhole, I observed an Australian Hobby darting around and crashing in and out of the canopy of the Melaleucas, chasing a small bird. After some time, the pursued bird was identified as a Peaceful Dove, which was narrowly evading

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the Hobby by fleeing from tree to tree, where it would dart deep into the canopy. This method of repeatedly crashing and landing heavily into foliage is commonly employed by the Australian Hobby when seeking out and flushing sheltering prey (Marchant & Higgins 1993). The Hobby persisted with this tactic for a couple of minutes and it appeared that it would eventually catch the Peaceful Dove. However, the Peaceful Dove suddenly dove quickly and directly from a tree above the waterhole into the water. The Hobby pursued the Peaceful Dove as it dropped, but narrowly missed catching it. The waterhole was shallow, and the Peaceful Dove lay in the muddy water with its head, bill and back just above water. It looked inconspicuous, but was apparently still visible to the Hobby, which twice swooped close to the partially submerged bird but stopped shy of the water.

I continued to watch the two birds from a hide which had been erected at the waterhole edge in order to observe Partridge Pigeons. The Hobby perched in a nearby tree and apparently watched the Peaceful Dove, which remained motionless in the water. After approximately 10 minutes the Hobby flew off, but the Peaceful Dove remained in the water for a further 20 minutes. It then slowly rose in the water, walked to the edge and stood on a tree root. After fluffing and briefly preening its soiled and sodden plumage, it flew slowly away.

The diet of the Australian Hobby is diverse, including insects and mammals but consisting mostly of small birds (<75g), and there are reports of this species successfully preying on Peaceful Doves (Marchant & Higgins 1993). As well as capturing prey from the air and ground, the Australian Hobby has been reported taking prey from the surface of water (Marchant & Higgins 1993). This particular attempt may have been unsuccessful because the Peaceful Dove was partially submerged. As far as I can ascertain, there are no previous reports in the literature of the Peaceful Dove or other Australian members of the pigeon family sheltering from pursuant predators in water.

## References

- Marchant S. and Higgins P.J. (eds) (1993) *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds. Volume 2: Raptors to Lapwings*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne.
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